THE ORIGINAL DOCTRINE OF VALENTINUS THE GNOSTIC*

BY

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In the beginning

On revient toujours à ses premiers amours. During the Second World War, in difficult circumstances, I tried to reconstruct the primitive doctrine of the Egyptian heresiarch Valentinus. The results of my exertions were published in the first issue of the journal *Vigiliae Christianae* (1947). This article was nothing more than a provisional attempt to unravel a tangled tale. But it so happened that it became basic, when Ptolemaeus' *Epistle to Flora* was published and the relation of his views on the Old Testament to those of his Master (Valentinus) were discussed; somewhat later, on May 10th 1952, the Jung Codex was acquired with five unknown gnostic writings which were held to reflect successive stages in the evolution of the school of Valentinus. Our basic presumption in editing these works was that Valentinus had been much more radical than his followers in the so-called Italic School, Ptolemaeus and Heracleon.

In 1947 I had accepted some plausible results of previous research:

1) Valentinus knew only one Sophia;
2) according to him a preexistent Jesus had left his mother Sophia and had ascended to the pleroma; (this was the spiritual body and heavenly flesh which Christ brought down to earth);
3) Valentinus was very much against Jehova, the demiurge, whom he considered to be the cause of death.

At the same time I could not convince myself that Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian had simply lied when they reported about Valentinus. And after intensive research I concluded that Lipsius had proved decisively that Pseudo-Tertullian's *Adversus omnes haereses*, Filastrius of Brescia's *Diversarum haereseon liber* and their parallels in Epiphanius' *Panarion* 57, preserved in outline the lost *Syntagma* of Hippolytus; Hippolytus may have used an updated copy of Justin Martyr's *Syntagma against all heresies*, which Justin mentions in his *First Apology* (26,8).

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Now the time seems to have come to see if the main outlines of my juvenile sin can still be maintained, and which sources are available to identify the views of Valentinus.

LITERATURE

R.A. Lipsius, *Zur Quellenkritik des Epiphanius*, Vienna 1865; G. Quispel, *The Original Doctrine of Valentine*, *V.C.* 1, 1947, 43-73; *idem*, *Ptolémée, Lettre à Flora*, 2nd edition, Paris 1966 (a basic text and commentary, which should not be ignored in any book on Valentinus).

Epistola Jacobi Apocrypha

The *Apocryphal Epistle of James* (the brother of the Lord) could be read as a writing which issued from the school of Valentinus, were it not that it proclaims that persecution is to be accepted, even provoked. That it contains Valentinian elements is only too obvious:

> Woe to you, who have received grace only as a loan, which has to be paid back;
> Blessed are those who express themselves with perfect freedom and possess grace.
>
> 11,13-17

This echoes the spiritual pride of the Valentinians, who held that the Catholics had received grace only as a provisional loan, which could be withdrawn from them, whereas the pneumatics had received from the spiritual world a grace which was an inalienable possession (Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 1,6,4). On the other hand, some allusions to provoked martyrdom are unmistakable:

> Verily, I say to you, none of those who fear death will be saved. For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who seek death.
>
> 6,15-18

Among the different groups of Christians the Montanists certainly were very provocative in times of persecution. And yet, this apocryphal epistle cannot have originated from Montanist circles because it rejects prophesy:

> Do you not know that the head of prophesy was hewn off with John the Baptist?
>
> 6,29-31

In the time of Clement of Alexandria such Montanists were present in the Church there. They were criticized by some and branded as murderers and suicides (*Stromateis* IV,IV,16,3). Others in Alexandria seem to have been impressed by their courage, but at the same time to have despised their emotional revivalism. One of them seems to have been the author of the *Epistula Jacobi Apocrypha.* Much was possible at that time in the Christian congregation there: Jewish Christians, Encratites, Platonists, Montanists and all sorts of gnostics lived there peacefully side by side, until bishop Demetrius founded his monarchic episcopacy with the help of Rome.

This helps us to date the writing we discuss. If it shows traces of Montanist radicalism, the *terminus post quem* must be 160 A.D. This date should make scholars extremely sceptical about all endeavours to find a tradition independent of the canonical Gospels in this apocryphon. The alternative option seems to be preferable:

Blessed will they be who have not seen and yet have believed. 12,39-13,1	Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed. Gospel of John 20:29

In this writing Jesus declares that he has remained another eighteen months (= 540 days) with his disciples to explain to them the parables of the shepherds and the seed and the building, the lamps of the virgins, the wage of the workmen, the didrachmai and the woman (7,22-8,27). This list of parables is certainly a strong indication of a use of canonical gospels in this writing. And if the principles of form-critical analysis are not applied in a vacuum, but certain facts of the history of the Church are taken into account, we need not assume that the above passage is an interpolation.

A host of literary and ideological parallels with classic Alexandrian gnosticism, with such primitive Egyptian writings as the *Ascension of Isaiah* and the *Second Letter of Clement* and even with Catholic Alexandrian authors like Clement of Alexandria and Origen oblige us to situate the *Apocryphal Epistle of James* within the direct influence of the Alexandrian Church. We may even say that it reflects the history of this Church in the second century. Alexandria was evangelized from nearby Jerusalem. For this reason, James, the brother of the Lord, is here the primate, taking precedence even over Peter. Their ascent to heaven, their songs of praise together with the angels (who sing the *Sanctus*) is described with the colours of esoteric Judaism. The words put in the mouth of the Saviour reflect the life of the second century congregation in Alexandria, faced with persecution and Montanist fundamentalism, and yet on the way to Catholicism. Above all it reveals

the admirable period when the Church still tolerated gnostics in its midst and was ready to learn from men like Valentinus and Basilides.

The author of the *Epistula Jacobi Apocrypha* loves Paul, but interprets him in a gnostic way:

The Word is like a grain of wheat; when someone has sowed it, he had *faith* in it; and when it grew, he came to *love* it, because he saw many grains of corn in the place of one; and after he had *worked* he remained alive, because he had prepared it as food; moreover he had left over some corn to sow it next time.
So also it is possible for you to receive for yourselves the Kingdom of Heaven. If you do not receive this through *gnosis*, you will not be able to find it.
8,16-27

For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything,
nor uncircumcision,
but *faith*
which *worketh*
by *love*.
Gal. 5:6

The man who wrote this is a seasoned Paulinist. He is well aware that faith worketh by love (Galatians 5:6). He also intertwines his words with an allusion to the triad of faith, hope and charity (1 Corinthians 13:13). He does not even shrink from using one of Paul's most audacious metaphors: "For your sakes I have placed myself under the curse, that you may be saved" (13:23; cf. Gal. 3:13).

Most probably, however, he goes further than Paul because he means to say that Christ has undergone the malediction of a malevolent demiurge. And certainly he has not the ambivalent attitude of Paul towards Gnosis, as when the latter confronts ecstatic proto-Gnostics, possibly inspired by the Alexandrian Apollos, with the harsh words: "Gnosis puffeth up, but love edifieth" (1 Cor. 8:1). For him, even faith, hope and charity are worthless if they are not supplemented by that personal acquaintance with Jesus Christ and spiritual experience which in Greek is called γνῶσις.

The author of the *Apocryphal Epistle of James* was a member of the second century Church of Egypt and reflects the theological preoccupations of the congregation. He was familiar with the canonical Gospels and Letters of Paul. He was no coward and seems to have been impressed by the bold audacity with which the Montanist members of the Church accepted and even sought martyrdom. At the same time he rejected their exuberant and sentimental spirituality. Living in a time when Valentinus had already built up a network of schools throughout Egypt and elsewhere, he certainly was

familiar with certain tenets held by the Valentinian faction within the Church of Alexandria. Close reading of the text might reveal that he shared their views about the curse of the demiurge and the inalienability of grace. He may have belonged to the Valentinian faction. In that case his writing may still be called Valentinian, like the other four books of the Codex Jung.

LITERATURE

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The Gospel of Truth

The *Evangelium Veritatis* is the Charter of ancient Gnosticism. It not only offers a powerful and impressive description of life in the world as a bad dream, but also contains the shorthand definition of Gnosis as an intuitive knowledge of man's origin, essence, and ultimate destination. It is christocentric: Christ delivers spiritual man from the world and reveals to him the Unknown God and his deepest Self.

Who was the author of this writing? Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* III,11,9 states that it was written some time ago (before 185, the date of Irenaeus) by Valentinians ("*ab his non olim conscriptum*"). They boasted to have more gospels than the canonical ones: the fifth one they called *Veritatis Evangelium*. There is no doubt whatsoever that this title refers to the beginning of the third writing of the Jung Codex:

> The *Gospel of Truth* is a joy for those who have received from the Father of truth the grace of knowing him.

The gist of what Irenaeus transmits is that the Valentinians considered this writing as a gospel ("*plura habere evangelia*").

The difficulty is, however, that it is not what we call a Gospel, a book about the teaching, cross and resurrection of Jesus. It is rather a homily on the Gospel as the revelation of God, the book of life written in the pleroma and announced by Jesus in the end of days (23). We should remember, however, that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were originally not gospels in our sense either. They were kerygmatic biographies in the Greek sense of the word, which were only later styled as gospels. *Euangelion*

in Greek means: a reward for good news; in the New Testament it became: God's good news to men. It was only in the second half of the second century that it came to mean a book dealing with the life and teaching of Jesus. Was the *Evangelium Veritatis* a gospel? For the author, no, for the Valentinians, yes. For them it was indeed the fifth gospel.

How different is the report of Pseudo-Tertullian 4:6: "*evangelium habet suum praeter haec nostra.*" Here it is affirmed, that Valentinus (and not his pupils) has a gospel of his own, beside the four canonical gospels. It is correct that both the few fragments that remain of Valentinus and the *Gospel of Truth* contain allusions to the four gospels, John included. And, of course, the assertion that he had (written) a gospel of his own can only by perverted ingenuity be interpreted as a misunderstanding of Irenaeus' information that it was written by his pupils. On the contrary, it would seem that Pseudo-Tertullian and his source Hippolytus are transmitting a very old and trustworthy tradition which may go back to Justin Martyr. Justin was the first author known to us who uses *euaggelion* in the sense of a book (1st *Apology* 66). And if in his preserved works he does not quote the Fourth Gospel, this may be for partisan reasons: he was the spokesman of the Petrine faction under the direction of Pius (140-155), whereas one of the leaders of the Pauline faction in Rome, Valentinus, preferred the Gospel of John.

One thing is certain: the *Gospel of Truth* agrees with the preserved fragments of Valentinus and with his system as transmitted by Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, I,11,1. This becomes clear when, upon close reading and persistent questioning, the reader uncovers the myth behind its allusive and sophisticated style. It tells us that ignorance, unconsciousness, had brought forth error: these terms must relate to misguided Sophia and her abortive child Jehova. This demiurge is said to have worked on its own matter *foolishly*, without knowing the truth, with the result that his creation had a semblance of beauty, but was nevertheless only a deficient equivalent of the Truth, an illusive reality (*Gospel of Truth* 17,10-25).

The theme of the ignorant demiurge is well-known from the *Apocryphon of John* (Alexandria ±120). There Jehova is called *Saklas*, Aramaic for "fool," because he does not know that there is a God beyond god. Valentinus himself declared (in fragment 1) that the angels who moulded the body of Adam became frightened because, owing to the pneumatic seed within him, he revealed by his speech that there existed a pre-existent *Anthropos* in the spiritual world above. These creative angels were obviously ignorant of the God beyond god. And one of them was the creator, an angel—as in the

gnostic systems of Simon the Magician, Carpocrates, and the Valentinians. All later Valentinians taught the distinction between the demiurge and God. One of them, an adherent of the Italic school, must have been familiar with the view that the demiurge was foolish, because he called him *mōros* ("fool") (Hippolytus, *Refutatio* VI,35,1). It is possible that Valentinus had served as an intermediary of this Alexandrian lore with an Aramaic pun.

The author of the *Gospel of Truth* is more radical and goes farther than any known Valentinian. According to him the demiurge was hostile to Jesus: "error" (= Jehova) grew angry with him, persecuted him, brought him to bay: so Jesus was nailed to the cross and thus became a fruit of the Gnosis of the Father. The fruit of this true tree of Gnosis, however, did not kill, like the fruit of the tree of knowledge in Paradise, but became cause of joy (*Gospel of Truth* 18,22-31).

The author of this passage is a Paulinist: like the apostle he knows that the World Powers, the "princes of this world," did not know the hidden Wisdom of God: for had they known Her, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory, who is the embodiment of this Sophia (2 Corinthians 2:8). But this Paulinist goes far beyond Paul: his "error" is malicious and murders Christ. None of the Valentinians has followed suit. But he is in full agreement with Valentinus himself: the latter is quoted as having said that "the cause of death is the work of the creator of the world" (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* IV,89,4). There is no reason to suppose that this is not correctly reported by Clement. I think this pleads in favour of those who hold that it was Valentinus who wrote the *Gospel of Truth.* In any case he must have said that the demiurge murdered Jesus.

This venomous animosity against Jehova, which is so shocking for well-meaning souls who do not know the Old Testament very well, proves that Valentinus, far from being a biblical Platonist or a Tübinger Vermittlungstheologe, was no exception to the Gnostic and Valentinian rule. Even if the author of the *Gospel of Truth* was not identical with Valentinus himself, he agrees with him and may be used for the reconstruction of his doctrine.

Literature

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Jens Holzhausen, *Der "Mythos vom Menschen" im Hellenistischen Aegypten*, Hain 1993, 1-188.

Birger A. Pearson, "Gnosticism in Early Egyptian Christianity," 204, in *Gnosticism, Judaism and Egyptian Christianity*, Minneapolis 1990: "The section on Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* containing accounts of Simon, Menander, Satornil, and Basilides (1.23-24) is the material most likely based on Justin's lost *Syntagma against heresies* (referred to in *Apol.* 1.26)."

Valentinus on love and marriage

According to Clement of Alexandria, Valentinus and his followers consider couples of man and wife and their copulations to be a symbol of the sacred marriage of the aeons and for that reason they are all in favour of marriage:

> Οἱ μὲν οὖν ἀμφὶ τὸν Οὐαλεντῖνον ἄνωθεν ἐκ τῶν θείων προβολῶν τὰς συζυγίας καταγαγόντες εὐαρεστοῦνται γάμῳ.
>
> Valentinus and his followers derive couples from the divine emanations above and for this reason take a delight in marriage.
>
> *Stromateis* III,1,1, Stählin-Fruchtel 195.

I have been criticised for this translation of Οἱ ἀμφὶ τὸν Οὐαλεντῖνον. According to my opponent, Clement is supposed to say that the Valentinians around Valentinus were not ascetics, though they were gnostics, whereas Valentinus was ascetic and not a gnostic. But a quick glance at the Greek dictionary of Liddell and Scott shows that my teachers at grammar school were right: ἀμφί is inclusive in this context. Homer, *Ilias* 3,146: Οἱ δ' ἀμφὶ Πρίαμον, "*Priam and his train.*" Cf. *Acta Apostolorum* 13,13: Ἀναχθέντες δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς Πάφου οἱ περὶ Παῦλον ἦλθον εἰς Πέργην τῆς Παμφυλίας. *King James's version*: "Now when *Paul and his company* loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia". (More examples in W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, second edition 1958, Chicago and London, 645), *Statenvertaling*: "Ende *Paulus ende die met hem waren*. . . ."

In his third book Clement speaks about right and wrong self-control, ἐγκρατεία: there are (in the Alexandrian congregation) Encratites, who regret marriage, Marcionites, who hate the creation and therefore condemn sexuality, there are followers of Carpocrates, who allegedly preach free love. Still other Christians consider sexual intercourse as realized eschatology:

> There are those who call the "vulgar Aphrodite" a mystical communion . . . These miserable people hold that fleshly and sexual intercourse is a sacred mystery (ἱεροφαντοῦσι) and opine that it leads them up here and now to the Kingdom of God.
>
> *Stromateis* III,29,3, Stählin-Früchtel 208

Clement observes:

> If they, like the followers of Valentinus, would consider sexual intercourse as spiritual (καθάπερ οἱ ἀπὸ Οὐαλεντίνου πνευματικὰς ἐτίθεντο κοινωνίας), one would accept perhaps their views.
>
> *Stromateis* III,29,3, Stählin-Früchtel 209

Clement clearly thinks that Valentinus and his fellows are his only allies. Is that so? Clement condones marriage because it is necessary for the generation of children, on one condition, however, that neither husband nor wife feels any pleasure:

> A man must marry exclusively for the sake of begetting children. Therefore he must practice continence, so that he does not feel desire, not even for his own wife (ὡς μηδ' ἐπιθυμεῖν τῆς γυναικὸς τῆς ἑαυτοῦ).
>
> *Stromateis* III,57,2, Stählin-Früchtel 222

This motivation is absent from all Valentinian sources. Nowhere, not even in the *Gospel of Philip*, is it taught that marriage is for the begetting of children.

The aim and purpose of marriage according to Valentinus is rather to become one and whole:

> A man, who is in this world and has not loved a woman, so as to become one with her, is not out of true Reality (the pleroma) and will not go to true Reality. But a man of this world (a "psychic," a Catholic) who has had intercourse with a woman, will not enter the Reality (the pleroma), because he copulated with her in concupiscence.
>
> Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* I,6,4

Latin text: *ut ei coniungatur* (αὐτῇ κραθῆναι): love is not to be condoned, but is valued in its own right, because it achieves wholeness and unites the opposites. Intercourse is a spiritual experience, yes, but for pneumatics only. As such it symbolizes the wholeness and fullness of the aeons, couples of males and females, separate but equal, compensatory of each other. This means that a Valentinian woman should not be subjected to her husband, but equal with him and on the same footing. Together they reflect divine androgyny.

Valentinus did not agree with Clement and the Catholic faction in the Alexandrian Church, but with Hermes Trismegistos:

> Do you really mean to say that God is of either sex, Thrice Greatest Hermes? Certainly, Asclepius, and I go still further. It is my firm conviction that not only God is androgynous but also all that lives, men, animals, plants . . .

> You must realise that nothing is more certain and obvious than this truth that God the Lord of all that lives has devised to grant this mystery of everlasting procreation to all things. . . .
> I need not tell you how great and overwhelming the power of this mystery is: everybody can know from his own experience what I mean when he consults his own feelings and takes note of the sexual intercourse, which is a symbol of this mystery.
>
> *Asclepius* 21

Valentinus was all for sex and marriage, whereas Catholicism only condoned it. But the passage in Clement also proves that he postulated a spiritual world beyond this visible world which was exemplary for our reality. The "divine emanations" cannot be anything else than the αἰώνων θεῖα πρόσωπα (the divine faces of the aeons) mentioned by the Valentinian inscription of Flavia Sophé. Προβολή, however, projection of an aeon by God, presupposes metaphysics which differ considerably from *creatio ex nihilo* of incipient Catholicism. It holds that both the pleroma and the visible world flow from God, e-mana-te from Him, and therefore have a spiritual background. Nature is Spirit in exile.

Ultimately this concept of emanation can be traced to the old-time Egyptian religion: the Nile is tears of Isis, man (rome) is a tear (rime) of the divinity Re (the Sun).

This poetic image was taken over by the mysteries: in the ritual of initiation into the mystery of Aion, which is falsely called *The Leiden Magical Papyrus J395*, or also *The Leiden Cosmogony*, Psyche, Soul, arises from the laughter and sorrow of God:

> when God laughed for the seventh time, Psyche came into being: he roared with laughter, then burst into tears (καγχάζων ἐδάκρυσε).
>
> Merkelbach 120

We see against this background that Valentinus can easily have supposed that this world is essentially suffering, a smile and a tear of Wisdom. An echo of this is found in the myth of Ptolemaeus: ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ γέλωτος τὴν φωτεινὴν (οὐσίαν), from her smile the light (Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* I,4,2).

It is especially when Valentinus is put against an Alexandrian, Egyptian background that he turns out to be a real gnostic.

Literature

Christoph Markschies, *Valentinus Gnosticus*, Tübingen 1992, 87: "G. Quispel übersetzt unverständlicherweise: Valentinus and his followers."

He refers to: *The Study of Encratism, a historical survey*, in *La Tradizione dell' Enkrateia*, Rome 1985, 74.
The text of the inscription of Flavia Sophé can be found in: *Gnostic Studies* I, Istambul (Leiden) 1974, 58.
The mystical rituals of Alexandria in: R. Merkelbach, *Abrasax*, Opladen 1992.
Elaine Pagels, *Adam and Eve, Christ and the Church*, in Logan and Wedderburn, *The New Testament and Gnosis*, Edinburgh 1983, 172, discusses Clement's ideal of marriage without desire and observes: "To accomplish this, as one might imagine, is not easy."
Birger A. Pearson, Anti-Heretical Warnings in Codex IX from Nag Hammadi, in *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*, Minneapolis 1990, 188-193, discusses the polemics of the author of the writing called *The Testimony of Truth*, who certainly was an Encratite and possibly should be identified with Julius Cassianus: this man called Valentinus and his disciples as well as the Catholics: heretics, obviously because they accept marriage. "Thus, for the author of *The Testimony of Truth*, all Christians who do not conform to this 'test of orthodoxy' in matters of practice—a resolute encratism and anti-sacramentalism are fair game for polemical attack, whether they belong to the ecclesiastical camp or to the 'Gnostic' camp."
Note that *The Testimony of Truth* is supposed to have been written in Alexandria in the second century A.D.

The religious experience of Valentinus

In 1949 I identified a short report about the original doctrine of Valentinus that had not been noticed before. This mentions the fall of Sophia and describes it in an exceptional way. There is here only one Sophia. In his *De Trinitate* the then leader of the Catechetical School in Alexandria Didymus the Blind (±313-398) writes:

> He (Valentinus) taught that the last of the thirty aeons is *androgyne* and that is Sophia.
> She wanted to see the highest God and was repelled by His splendour (ὑπὸ τῶν μαρμαρυγῶν αὐτοῦ βληθεῖσα); she fell out of the heavens (= the pleroma).
> III,42

A parallel version can be found in the *Catecheses* of Cyril of Jerusalem VI,17-19. The two Catholic authors must have used an unknown source, perhaps the *Syntagma* of Hippolytus of Rome or a similar writing. This version summarizes more or less the much longer story told by Valentinus' pupil in Rome, Ptolemaeus:

> But forth rushed the very latest and youngest of the twelve last aeons, Sophia, and suffered a passion quite apart from her husband's embrace.

> This passion first arose among those aeons, who were connected with the aeons Noûs and Truth, but passed as by contagion to this aeon, Sophia, who was led astray by professed love, which was actually hybris, because she did not, like Noûs, enjoy communion with the perfect Father.
> The passion was a desire to know the Father: for she craved to understand his greatness.
> Not being able to realize her desire, because she aimed at the impossible, she became involved in extreme agonies because of the unfathomable depth and unsearchable nature of the Father and her love for him.
> Always reaching forward she would even have been absorbed by His sweetness and have been dissolved into His infinite Being, had she not encountered that power which established the All and kept it outside the ineffable Greatness (the Horos or Limit).
>
> Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* I,2,2

Ptolemaeus then goes on to tell the origin of a second Sophia. The same story is summarized in a few words by Theodotus, a leader of the Oriental School of Valentinianism, probably in Alexandria:

> The Aeon that wanted to understand what is beyond Gnosis has fallen into ignorance and formlessness.
>
> Clement of Alexandria, *Excerpts from Theodotus* 31,3

Theodotus, however, knows only *one* Sophia. It is a sound principle to assume that when the Western School and the Oriental School agree, they are indebted to the Master. Of course this is not quite certain, because the two schools can have developed in the same direction. Or Theodotus could have gone to Rome and consulted there Ptolemaeus and Heracleon. But then to simply deny this principle offers no certainty either, because you may deny what is in fact correct. Nothing is absolutely certain in historical research. But my principle creates clarity, whereas its negation creates confusion. And then, the doctrine in the passage of Didymus is attributed to Valentinus himself. His, then, was the abysmal view, that evil originates in the desire of God (φυσικὴ αἰῶνος ὁρμή, Irenaeus I,2,4) which like a focal infection spread through the whole pleroma and broke out in Sophia as a πλεονάζουσα ὁρμή, an urge which went too far, a philosophical eros which really was hybris, to understand God, which is impossible.

Didymus the Blind or his source did not invent himself the theme that the light of God is dazzling. It is found also in the *Tripartite Treatise*:

> She (Logos/Sophia) was *not able to bear the light*, but she looked into the abyss (βάθυς), she became double-minded. Therefore she was divided, she became deeply troubled and turned her gaze away because of her self-doubt and division, her forgetfulness and lack of gnosis, because her pride and expectation

> that she could understand the Incomprehensible, had become strong in her and were in her.
>
> 77,19-29

The passage in Didymus the Blind affirms that it was Valentinus himself who taught that Sophia was repelled by the irradiation of God's light. Why should this not be true? At that time the philosophical scene was dominated by the theme: *ratio omnia vincit*, reason overcomes everything. The intellect could penetrate everything everywhere. Travels in space were the order of the day: *sursum sunt ingentia spatia*, says Seneca. The philosophers of the lodge of Hermes Trismegistus agreed:

> Everything is permitted him: heaven itself seems not too high, for he measures it in his clever thinking as if it were nearby. No misty air dims the concentration of his thought.
>
> *Asclepius* 6, Copenhaver 70

> Be everywhere at once, on land, in the sea, in heaven; be not yet born, be in the womb, be young, old, dead, beyond death. And when you have understood all these at once – times, places, things, qualities – *then you can understand God.*
>
> *Corpus Hermeticum* XI,20, Copenhaver 41

The philosophy of Hermes Trismegistus was a way, which gradually, through grades, initiated the neophyte into the mysteries, which instructed him how to overcome the tyranny of the planets and to see, beyond time and place, God and himself. And every philosopher in Alexandria would have agreed with their contemporary Apuleius (±125 – ±185) that God can be understood:

> For wise men who have *by the strength of their mind* removed themselves from the body as far as possible, the *understanding* of this God lightens, even if only now and then, as a white light in deepest darkness with a rapid flash (*rapidissimo coruscamine lumen candidum intermicare*).
>
> Apuleius, *De deo Socratis* IV, Moreschini 11

Men like Philo of Alexandria occasionally could tune in with this choir of enthousiastic space travellers. Inspired by the philosophical Eros, he says, the wise man transcends the air, the planets and the stars, ascends still higher and beholds the archetypes and ideas and enthused by *sobria ebrietas* he even dares to approach God himself. But when he desires to see God, pure and unmixed beams of divine light are poured out like a torrent, so that the eye of the intellect is dizzied and blinded by the beams (*De opificio mundi* 71: ταῖς μαρμαρυγαῖς τὸ τῆς διανοίας ὄμμα σκοτοδινιᾶν). In

other words the *intellect does not see God* and only is aware of the fact that He is. I know of no text in Middle-Platonism which says that the mind is so dazzled by its approach towards God as the highest principle that it does not understand God. On the contrary, Apuleius said that the wise men understood God. I think the difference is explained by the fact that Philo was an exegete of the Bible and knew that his God was a *mysterium tremendum*, who dwelled in an unapproachable light. Valentinus says exactly the same. Sophia represents contemporary *philosophia* and its fall. Philo, like Valentinus, does not speak of a blinding through the contemplation of the ideas, but he does say that the mind is blinded, dazzled by God and does *not* see Him. I would call that a theistic God-experience. Augustine too had to learn that his God is not an impassive object of contemplation, but a transcendent subject of an encounter: *et reverberasti infirmitatem aspectus mei radians in me vehementer* (*Confessiones* VII,16).

Did Valentinus know Philo? Was he perhaps the first Christian to know Philo? It is an established fact that Christianity was introduced to Egypt in the first century from nearby Jerusalem. A tradition tells us that "a Hebrew man called Barnabas," coming from Jerusalem and sent by Peter, was the first to preach the Gospel in Alexandria (*Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* 1,9). That is an extremely trustworthy information, because it contradicts the official, Catholic version, according to which Mark, the author of the second Gospel, had come *from Rome* to found the Church in Alexandria.

As I said before, the Egyptian Church remained pluriform with gnostics, Encratites, Catholics and Jewish Christians until Demetrius, as a monarchic bishop (189-232), imposed Catholic ecclesiasticism upon it and the bulldozer started its work of levelling: one of the first victims of the bishop was Origen, the greatest thinker of the Greek Church. Valentinus could learn from the Jewish Christians that Christ was the Name ('Ιάω) of god (fragment 5: τὸ ὄνομα ἐπλήρωσεν τὸ ὑστερῆσαν ἐν πλάσει). But he was also familiar with esoteric Jewish traditions about the Glory of God, kabod, as Man (fragment 2 φόβον παρέσχεν προόντος Ἀνθρώπου). One day an Alexandrian Jew must have converted to Christianity and given his complete works of Philo to a teacher of the Catechetical "School," who preserved them for posterity. For the rabbis had a bulldozer too. Valentinus, then a Christian teacher within the Church, may well have read them.

But it was not because he had read Philo that he warned against the dangerous tendency of the philosopher and the mystic to understand God and to merge into his indefinite Being. It was because he knew that urge within himself. For that reason he changed the myth of the *Gnostikoi* in

Alexandria. They thought that the origin of all evil was the hybridic desire to play God:

> She wanted to bring forth a likeness out of herself without the consent of the Spirit—He had not approved—and without her consort and without his consideration.
>
> *Apocryphon of John* 9, Robinson 104

Instead, Valentinus describes the frustrations of the mind that wants to understand God. He knew the agony of the descent after:

> O dreadful is the shock
> intense the agony,
> when the ear begins to hear
> and the eye begins to see,
> the heart begins to beat,
> the pulse to throb again,
> the soul to feel the flesh
> and the flesh to feel the chain.
>
> Emily Brontë

LITERATURE

Philo und die altchristliche Häresie, *Theologische Zeitschrift* 5,6, 1949, 429-436.
C. Markschies, *Gnosis und Manichäismus*, Berlin 1994, 109: gives text of Didymus and Cyrillus.
David Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature, a survey*, Assen 1993, 125:

> But the theme of the mind bedazzled by its approach towards God as highest principle is too common in Middle Platonism to make a Philonic origin certain.

Alcinous, *Didaskalikos* 165,5, ed. J. Whittaker, Paris 1990, 23, declares that God, though inutterable, can be known by intuition (νῷ μόνῳ ληπτός). Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 247 (7-8) (μόνῳ θεατὴ νῷ), *Timaeus* 28A 1-2, and note 196 of Whittaker on page 105 of his edition. Cf. L. Rizzerio, L'évolution de la notion de Noûs, 231 in: Alois van Tongerloo (ed. in collaboration with Johannes van Oort), *The Manichaean Noûs*, Louvain 1995:

> Tout d'abord, déclare-t-il (scil.: Alcinous), Platon avait considéré le principe de toute chose comme ineffable (ἄρρητον), et il avait réservé à la faculté intuitive la possibilité de le connaître. Ce qui revient à dire que ce principe, échappant à toute définition, dépasse la connaissance déductive. Et effectivement, nulle part Alcinous n'exclut la possibilité d'avoir une perception, même limitée, du principe suprême.

C. Markschies, *Valentinus Gnosticus?*, Tübingen 1992, 327:

> Allerdings geht es bei Philo um die Blendung *bei der Schau der Ideeen*, während bei Didymus, einem Autor des 4. Jahrhunderts, der Fall der Sophia durch ihre Blendung erklärt wird. Das hat zunächst *gar nichts* mit Philo zu tun, sondern es handelt sich um eine interessante Platonisierung des Sophia-Mythos, die vermutlich auch *gar nichts mit Valentin* zu tun hat.

Birger A. Pearson, Friedländer revisited: Alexandrian Judaism and Gnostic Origins, in *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*, Minneapolis 1990, 10-28, shows how near Philo and the Jewish Gnostikoi were. It is quite possible that a gnostic like Valentinus knew both Philo and the incipient Gnosticism he (Philo) is up against. The theme that Adam was created by angels is Philonic. Friedländer was the first to use the *Syntagma* of Hippolytus in order to prove that Gnosticism is of Jewish, Alexandrian origin. He was right.

Jean-Pierre Mahé, La voie d'immortalité à la lumière des *Hermetica* de Nag Hammadi et de découvertes plus récentes, *Vigiliae Christianae* 45, 1991, 347-375, shows that Hermetism is a way of initiation to the beyond.

Roelof van den Broek, The Christian "School" of Alexandria in the second and third centuries, in: Drijvers and MacDonald, *Centres of Learning*, Leiden 1995, 39-47.

According to this author the διδάσκαλοι and the πρεσβύτεροι of second-century Alexandrian Christianity continued the roles of the rabbis and elders of the Jewish community in Alexandria. These teachers were responsible for all forms of religious education, from pre-baptismal instruction to high theology. They were, however, no ecclesiastical worthies but laymen. One of them was Valentinus.

It was their firm conviction that they not only participated in the apostolic tradition, but also in the same Spirit which had inspired the apostles. They were in fact charismatic διδάσκαλοι, not holders of academic chairs incorporated in a school with a fixed curriculum.

These people may all have shared some typically Alexandrian views, for instance that the Holy Scriptures have a deeper, mystical meaning, which can be found only by the method of allegorical interpretation. I add to these observations that the views of these Alexandrian rabbis, who anticipated Pantaenus, Clement and Origen and were also the forerunners of Valentinus, are perhaps to be identified with the *secta sanctior et in comprehensione divinae rei prudentior* mentioned by Calcidius, *Timaeus* I.V, Waszink 103, 1-2 (cf. G. Quispel, Hermes Trismegistus and the origins of Gnosticism, *V.C.* 46, 1992, 1-19). There was a continuous and uninterrupted chain of tradition transmitted within this school from Pantaenus until Didymus the Blind. It was only after the death of Didymus that bishop Theophilus (385-412) no longer accepted independent theological speculation. Therefore it is possible that Didymus has preserved a trustworthy tradition about the original doctrine of Valentinus the gnostic, πρεσβύτερος of the Christian Church in Alexandria.

De Resurrectione

There can be no reasonable doubt anymore that the fourth treatise of the Jung Codex, a well written and well organised essay on the resurrection couched in the form of a letter to an otherwise unknown man called Rheginus, originated in the school of Valentinus. Its purpose is to interpret the resurrection of Christ and of the believers as a return of the Spirit or true Self in man to the spiritual world in order to be reunited with God and repose in Him.

It is the Spirit alone, not the body or the soul, which is saved:

> Those who believe are immortal: the thought of those who are saved shall not perish, the Spirit of those who came to know him shall not perish.
> 46,21-24

Therefore the Saviour needed to have only a spiritual body, a sort of vehicle or *ochèma* which enabled him to descend on earth. This body, also called "flesh" and Son of Man (which here means: man) brought about the restoration of the Spirit into the spiritual world by its ascension. This doctrine is clearly inspired by the astrological concept of an "astral body" (*sidereum corpus*) which was so widespread in antiquity. At the same time it is an anticipation of the so-called "doctrine of physical salvation" (*physische Erlösungslehre*) which was developed by Irenaeus and Athanasius: Christ can only save something by assuming it unto his own personality. Compared with the Orthodox Fathers the author of *De resurrectione* is very docetic indeed: this body is just a spiritual "seed of the being from above," brought forth before the cosmic structure came into being.

It was on the issue of this Christology that the Italic School parted company with the Oriental School. Ptolemaeus and Heracleon held that Christ had assumed both a spiritual seed, brought forward by Sophia, and also a "psychic" body from the demiurge. On the contrary, the Eastern School, of which Axionicus was one of the leaders, taught that Christ had a spiritual body only (Hippolytus, *Refutatio* VI,35,6; *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 59,1-2). Axionicus was the only Valentinian who still at the time when Tertullian wrote his *Adversus Valentinianos* (207) had preserved the original doctrine of Valentinus: *Solus ad hodiernum Antiochiae Axionicus memoriam Valentini integra custodia regularum eius consolatur* (IV,3).

Axionicus was a leader of the Oriental School. Nothing indicates that the Oriental School did not distinguish between the demiurge and the Unknown God. On the contrary it was more radical in this respect than Ptolemaeus:

> Therefore the demiurge is an inferior product, because he originated from the passion of desire. Sophia was disgusted when she saw his severity, as they say.
>
> *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 33,3

That must have been the opinion of Axionicus too. And if he had remained faithful to the Master in every respect, we can be certain that Valentinus had the same view and therefore was a real gnostic. Was he a docetist too? Another leader of the Oriental School, Theodotus, relates that Jesus, as a human being, was in need of salvation:

> Jesus too needed redemption in order not to be arrested in his course on high by the idea of deficiency in which he had been placed, and to proceed through Wisdom, as Theodotus writes.
>
> *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 22,7

This certainly is a good parallel for the passage in the *Letter to Rheginus* we quoted. Jesus was said to be not exactly sinful, as some Jewish Christians held, but, having been brought forth by Sophia outside the pleroma, he was characterized by a certain deficiency, which had to be completed through his ascension to the spiritual world. That was the function of his spiritual body. We have reasons to suppose that both Theodotus and Axionicus had preserved the views of Valentinus himself.

Pseudo-Tertullian, *Adversus omnes haereses* 4, says that Christ according to Valentinus brought down with him a spiritual body: *spiritale corpus de caelo deferentem.* This information is confirmed by Tertullian. And I must stress that Tertullian has turned out to be a trustworthy witness on everything concerning the differences between Valentinus and his pupils. He was the only one to transmit that Valentinus located the aeons as ideas of God within the divine mind, whereas for Ptolemaeus they were outside God (*Adversus Valentinianos* 4,2); nobody ever suspected how correctly he reported the views of the Valentinians on the spiritual and symbolic meaning (*imaginaria significatio*) of the resurrection, (*De resurrectione mortuorum* 19,2-4), until this *Epistle to Rheginus* was discovered. And therefore he deserves our confidence, when he assures us that Valentinus, and not his pupils, had "invented that Christ had a spiritual body" (*De carne Christi* 15,7: *carnem Christi spiritalem comminisci*). The same is transmitted by Pseudo-Tertullian, *Adversus omnes haereses* 4. Did Tertullian owe his information to the *Syntagma* of Justin Martyr, to which he refers in *Adversus Valentinianos* 5,1: *Nec utique dicemur ipsi nobis finxisse materias, quas tot iam viri sanctitate et praestantia insignes, nec solum nostri antecessores sed ipsorum haeresiarcharum contemporales, instructissimis voluminibus et prodiderunt et retuderunt, ut Iustinus, philosophus et martyr?*

Wherever Tertullian found the report that according to Valentinus Christ had a spiritual body, there is no doubt that his information is correct. Not even a passage in the few authentic fragments of Valentinus could challenge it, because it is possible that Valentinus in the course of his life had changed his views or had condescended to his audience. But such a fragment does not exist. Therefore, as far as the Christology of the *Epistle to Rheginus* is concerned, it agrees completely with the views of the founder of the sect. He could be the author. But a representative of the Eastern School, who had the same view, could equally well have written this treatise.

There is, however, one problem which seems not to have been noticed up till now. Against the witness of a host of Fathers, who all maintain that the gnostics denied the resurrection of the body, the author of the *Epistle to Rheginus* declares in so many words that the flesh will be saved at death:

> If it is true that once thou wert not in the flesh, but only took flesh at the moment when thou didst come into this world, wherefore should thou not also take on flesh when thou goest up to the spiritual world?
>
> 47,2-8

I know of no parallel to this astonishing view in any Catholic or gnostic source. But the same concept is formulated in the discourse of Hermes Trismegistus called *The Key*, *C.H.* X:

> The same thing also happens to those who leave the body: when the soul rises to itself, the subtle body is drawn into the blood and the soul into the subtle body, but the spirit, since it is divine by nature, becomes purified of its veils, the soul and the astral body, and *takes on a fiery body.*
>
> 16

> Now, when the Spirit has abandoned the earthy body, *it immediately puts on its own tunic*, a tunic of fire, in which it could not stay when in the earthy body.
>
> 18

This seems to be a very special tradition of the Hermetic mystics, which was transmitted in their lodge in Alexandria and picked up by the author of our Epistle.

Pseudo-Tertullian, who in this case certainly does not depend on Irenaeus, because nothing of the kind is found there, contains information which could not be understood before the discovery of the *Epistle to Rheginus*. He transmits that Valentinus himself denies the resurrection of the fleshly body, but *affirms the resurrection of another flesh* (4: *resurrectionem huius carnis negat, sed alterius*). That is exactly what Rheginus is told. And therefore, it seems wise to provisionally assume that Valentinus is the author of this Epistle, until

the same peculiar view is attested for a later Valentinian. He lived in Alexandria, he could know the Hermetic doctrine. But then we must also accept another item of Pseudo-Tertullian in the same chapter, that Christ had a spiritual body. It would seem that fragment 3 of the Master presupposes the same concept:

> In everything he was submitted to, Jesus remained in full control of himself. In that way he worked out his own divinity. He used to eat and to drink in a special way, without execreting his solids. So great was the power of his self-control, that the food in his body was not digested, because all form of corruption was alien to him.

Alluding to a well-known physiological fact, namely the relative power of the human will over the digestive organs, Valentinus affirms that the power of Jesus in this respect was absolute. He speaks in this fragment about "the *sarkion*, which Sophia had brought forth for the Logos, the pneumatic seed, which the Saviour had put on when he descended" (*Excerpta ex Theodoto* 1,1). Everybody in Alexandria knew that the soul needed an astral body in order to incarnate: the *sarkion* was the equivalent of Valentinus for this subtle body and was called: flesh, to suggest that Valentinus affirmed the incarnation: he certainly knew the *Gospel of John* and its prologue: ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο (1:14). This pneumatic body was of course as such immortal and incorruptible, but unconscious of its consubstantiality with God and deficient, because it had originated from Sophia outside the pleroma. Through asceticism, Jesus awakened this divine spark and so worked out his own salvation. As a Paulinist, Valentinus knew that the apostle had said: "work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (*Philippians* 2:12). In so far as Jesus had been human, he had done the same.

Whosoever wants to understand Valentinus, must have an eye for his Alexandrian background, for the eclectic Middle-Platonism of Eudorus, for the Hermetic lodge there and for the curious Jewish sect of the *Gnostikoi* with their *Apocryphon of John* and other non-Valentinian writings from Nag Hammadi. This will perhaps enable him to appreciate the summary of Valentinus' myth in Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* I,11,1. This short account is garbled and incomplete and in places difficult to understand, perhaps also because the unknown source of Irenaeus did not understand Valentinus very well. But where Alexandrian parallels are available, the report may be trustworthy.

According to this chapter the Mother, Sophia, was exiled from the pleroma. There she brought forth Christ (i.e. Jesus, the vehicle of Christ)

in remembrance of the higher world, but with a kind of shadow. Since he was masculine, he cut off the shadow and hastened up to the pleroma above. Thereupon she had been emptied of spiritual substance and emitted Jehova and the devil (a remarkable twin). Of course, it is the progress of Jesus' spiritual body which in this passage is projected into prehistory. But there is more to it than that. Valentinus also wanted to explain how Sophia brought forth a demiurge, who is "psychic," and not "pneumatic," and a hylic devil—in short reality which is not spiritual. This can be paralleled from the Hermetica:

> From the lower elements the Logos of God leapt straight up to the pure region of Nature and united with the creative Spirit (for the Logos is consubstantial with Him). The lower elements of Nature were left behind devoid of reason, so as to be mere matter.
>
> *Poimandres, C.H.* I,10

Seen in this perspective, the concept of Valentinus, which is not found elsewhere, is blasphemous and very heretical, but also Hermetic, Alexandrian, and full of sense. The other elements of Irenaeus I,11,1 should be studied critically and with empathy, but not be explained away. Or wished away. We conclude then, that the *Letter to Rheginus* agrees with the fragments of Valentinus and with trustworthy reports about his own doctrine, and should be used to reconstruct his myth.

Literature

W.C. van Unnik, The newly discovered Epistle to Rheginus on the Resurrection. *Sparsa Collecta* III, Leiden 1983, 244-272: date: 150. It should be observed that also according to Alcinous, *Didaskalikos* XXIII, Whittaker 45 *sqq.* only the νοῦς is divine and immortal, whereas the two other parts of the soul, made not by the πρῶτος θεός, but by the δημιουργοῦντες θεοί, are mortal and serve only as a vehicle (ὄχημα) for the νοῦς. According to the same Alcinous it is contestable that irrational souls are immortal. It seems probable that they are not of the same substance as reasonable people (μήτε τῆς αὐτῆς οὐσίας εἶναι ταῖς λογικαῖς, Whittaker 50,31). In his note 404 on page 30 Whittaker remarks: "Cette doctrine, qui s'accorde avec le Timée 69 C5-E4, était répandue à l'époque du moyen-platonisme." Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis* IV,89,4) affirms that Valentinus opines that pneumatics are saved by nature (φύσει γὰρ σῳζόμενον γένος ὑποτίθεται καὶ αὐτός). This must be true if indeed Valentinus was a Platonist. All Platonists taught in that period that only spiritual men can be saved. Manlio Simonetti, Psyche e Psychikos nella gnosi valentiniana, *Orthodossia ed Eresia tra I e II secolo,* Messina 1994, 141-205 (unselfish mine of learning which

a student of Valentinus ignores at his cost). On Irenaeus I,11,1 Simonetti observes:

> Come è noto, il mito esposto da Valentino conosce una sola Sophia, e lo adoppiamento del personaggio si deve ai suoi discepoli. . . .
> E se si objetta che Ireneo (1,11,1) è qui poco attendibile, respondiamo che tale giudizio è aprioristico e arbitrario, perche proprio la pubblicazione dei testi gnostici in Copto ha ulterioramente confermato l'attendibilità dell'informazione dell' dottore asiatico. Mi referisco all notizia di Iren. Haer. I, 29, che, quando si è presa conoscenza dell'*Apocrifo di Giovanni*, è resultata corrispondere nel modo più fedele alla prima parte di questo testo.

L. Koenen und Cornelia Römer, *Der Kölner Mani-Kodex*, Opladen 1988, 81:

> Mani observes in that passage that the body is impure and fashioned in an impure creature. The proof of that is the digestion of food. When one observes the fast for a few days, immediately these shameful and repulsive excretions stop.

Tractatus Tripartitus

The fifth treatise of the Jung Codex, falsely called *Tripartite Treatise*, describes the history of the universe from its primeval origin in The Unknown to its ultimate return to the pleroma after passing through the Inferno of materialism and paganism and through the Purgatorio of the religion and ethics of Judaism to the Paradiso of the free Spirit inaugurated by the Christ event.

This text is basically optimistic: *tout est pour le mieux dans le meilleur des mondes possibles*. Its special attention is focused on the destiny of the "psychics," true believing Catholics, who excel in good works but are Spiritless. According to the author of this writing, they too, like the "pneumatics," will enter the pleroma. This is new and surprising. No other Valentinian writing offers the same view.

Rodolphe Kasser is the only one to believe that Valentinus himself is the author of this writing. He holds that the *Tractatus Tripartitus*, as he called it, is in reality three different writings, composed at different stages with differing views and in various styles during the lifetime of the archheretic. At the time he wrote this, 1969, Kasser did not know that a version of the myth, from the hand of Ptolemaeus, was transmitted in the first book of *Adversus haereses* of Irenaeus of Lyon and that Ptolemaeus differed considerably from Valentinus and agreed in many respects with the new

text. Therefore my first task as an editor of the *Tractatus Tripartitus* was to show that this document was a consistent whole and must have originated in the Western or Italic branch of Valentinianism, which was directed by Ptolemaeus and Heracleon. As a matter of fact, there were many parallels between this *Tripartite Treatise* and the preserved fragments of Heracleon's *Commentary on the Gospel of John*. But there were also differences.

The thought of its author is characterised by a high level of abstraction which is not to be found in other writings from the Valentinian school:
1) The dyad Depth and Silence, still preserved by Ptolemaeus, has become a *monas*;
2) The *quaternio* Depth—Silence, Noûs—Aletheia, of Valentinus and Ptolemaeus has become a trinity of God, the Son and the Church/Holy Ghost;
3) Sophia has lost all feminine features and is turned into an asexual Logos. Moreover the exotic character of the myth has been removed: the aeons are no longer androgyne. We are miles away from the imaginative mysticism of the bridal chamber in the *Gospel of Philip* or the prurient style of the Valentinian so-called *Lehrbrief* transmitted by Epiphanius, *Panarion* 31,5-6;
4) The tendency to appreciate more fully the "psychic element" and the "psychics," which reflects overtures to the growing Catholic Church, has reached here its *acmé*: even the true believers in the end enter the nirvana of the pleroma (132,8). Ptolemaeus and Heracleon had not gone as far as that: they had indeed promised eternal bliss to "psychics," but only at the entrance of the pleroma (*Excerpta ex Theodoto* 63,1). This of course was a concession against the logic of the system which requires that the Spirit alone returns to its origin. This must have been the view of Valentinus himself. Accordingly, in the *Gospel of Truth*, the *Epistle to Rheginus* and the *Gospel of Philip* no attention whatsoever is paid to the ways and fate of the "psychics."
5) The demiurge has lost here all negative features: he is the instrument of the Logos/Sophia in the creation of the universe:

> For the Logos made use of him as a *hand* to adorn and work at the things below, and he made use of him as a *mouth* to speak the things that are to be prophesied.
>
> 100,30-35

In his *Letter to Flora* (7,5) Ptolemaeus is more ambivalent: the demiurge is neither good nor bad, but just. For these reasons I agree now with Attridge and Pagels who write:

> The *Tripartite Treatise* revises the major themes of Valentinian theology more radically than any other extant source and approximates more closely than any other Valentinian thinker the positions taken by more orthodox theologians of the third and fourth centuries.

Indeed, the author has gone all the way from *mythos* to *logos*. In the process the author has also rehabilitated some positions of Valentinus which had been abandoned by Ptolemaeus:

1) Logos-Sophia brought forth the pre-existent Jesus. He ran upwards to what is his own and to his kin in the pleroma.

78,3-5

2) The unconditional optimism of the author is anticipated by fragment 1, the hymn of Valentinus about the sympathy and concatenation of everything:

> I see in the Spirit that every thing is coherent with every other thing,
> I intuit in the spirit that all things are contained by the Spirit.

For his holistic view of the universe Valentinus was much indebted to Posidonius of Apameia, whose philosophy is characterised by the key words: Kosmos and Sympathy. The anti-cosmism of the gnostics should not be overrated. They were against the Creator, yes, but the creation was appreciated as a means to make the Spirit conscious.

3) Adam was fashioned by the demiurge and other angels, stimulated by Sophia-Logos, who invisibly grants the divine Spirit to the first man:

> Like that of all else is the creation of Adam as well. The spiritual Logos (Sophia) made him move invisibly, when he (she) perfected him (Adam) through the intermediary of the demiurge and the angelic servants, who shared with him in the moulding of the body, when he (Jehova) took counsel with these archonts of his . . .
>
> The Logos (Sophia) gave the first form through the demiurge in his ignorance, so that he (Adam) would learn that the exalted one (the Unknown God) exists and would know that he (Adam) needs Him. This is what the prophet Moses called "Living Spirit" and "Breath of the invisible spiritual world": This is the "living soul" which has given life to the body which was dead at first. For ignorance is death.
>
> 105,17-28

This very special interpretation of the Genesis story seems to be presupposed by Valentinus in fragment 1, according to which Adam spoke freely *owing to the agent* who had deposited in him a seed of the higher world. For this reason, awe overcame the angels over the creature they had

moulded. There is no doubt that this fragment is gnostic. Already at the time of the author of the *Tripartite Treatise* it was well known that it was a Jewish heresy which declared that Adam was created by angels (112,17 *sqq.*). The *Gnostikoi* of the *Apocryphon of John* had borrowed this concept from these Jewish heretics. But they included Jaldabaoth among the angels to whom he spoke: "Come, let us make an human being after the image of God and after our images." (15,1-5).

As so often this Alexandrian perspective allows us to elucidate this fragment of Valentinus and to discern the continuity between him and his school.

If the author of the *Tripartite Treatise* is not Heracleon, this does not mean that all his ideas were unknown. On the contrary, his curious doctrine of the "eternal generation of the Son," which anticipated Origen and the Oecumenical Council of Constantinopel in 381, was attested in the *Syntagma* of Hippolytus:

> *Exstitit praeterea Heracleon alter haereticus, qui cum Valentino paria sentit, sed novitate quadam pronuntiationis vult videri alia sentire. Introducit enim in primis illud fuisse quod dominum* (Routh, or: *deum?*) *pronuntiat, et deinde ex illa monade duo, ac deinde reliquos aeonas.*
>
> Pseudo-Tertullian, *Adversus omnes haereses* 4

> *Post hunc* (sc. Secundus) *Heracleon discipulus ipsius surrexit dicens principium esse unum, quem deum appellat, deinde de hoc natum aliud, deque his duobus generationem multorum adserit principiorum.*
>
> Filaster of Brescia, *Diversarum hereseon liber XIII*

That is exactly what this treatise affirms: from the Unknown God the Son was born, from these two comes forth the Holy Ghost. This proves that Hippolytus was aware of the fact that this version was current among the Valentinians, in Rome. As so often, his *Syntagma* transmits very trustworthy information. Of course, he did not need the *Syntagma of Justin* for this information. He could just get hold of our text, or hear what it contained. In that case the *Tractatus Tripartitus* must have been written before the death of Hippolytus (±235). Its ideas could have influenced both Plotinus and Origen. Recent research has confirmed that Lipsius was right: Pseudo-Tertullian, Filastrius, and Epiphanius *Panarion* 57 reproduce a common document (Grundschrift or G.), that is to be identified with Hippolytus' *Syntagma.*

We now know, owing to the *Tractatus Tripartitus*, that Hippolytus was

very well informed about the brilliant ideas of Heracleon's gifted pupil; the author of this tractate.

The *Refutatio*, however, transmits a very different story (VI,29-36). It also tells that the Ground of being is a *monad*, who being love, brings forth the Beloved (Son). This proves that this report also originated in the Italic school of Heraclcon, probably in Rome. But it goes on to tell that the demiurge is foolish (35: μωροῦ θεοῦ) and mentions the names of all the aeons. In short, this source is much worse than that of Hippolytus in his *Syntagma*. Therefore it seems to me to be somewhat improbable that the author of the *Refutatio* was Hippolytus. But I leave that to others to decide. More important is that the *Tripartite Treatise* originated in the school of Heracleon and yet preserved some elements of the original doctrine of Valentinus the gnostic.

LITERATURE

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E. Thomassen (in E. Thomassen and L. Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite (NH 1,5)*, Québec 1989, 11 *sqq.*) rightly observes that this treatise contains primitive elements and concludes therefore that it originated in the Oriental School. Following him J.D. Dubois holds that there were no Occidental and Oriental schools of Valentinianism: *Le Traité Tripartite*, in *Les Textes de Nag Hammadi et le Problème de leur Classification*, edited by L. Painchaud and Anne Pasquier, Québec 1995, 221-233.

Jaap Mansfeld, *Heresiography in Context, Hippolytus' Elenchos as a Source for Greek Philosophy*, Leiden 1992, 321: "The appendix (chs. 45-53) to Tertullian's *De praescriptione haereticorum* (= *Adversus omnes haereses*) is generally believed to correspond to the lost Hippolytean Syntagma."

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